

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a photosensitive member adapted to have an electrostatic latent image carried thereon;

a developing unit including a developer-carrying member rotatable in a direction against gravity at a contacting point with, or a point closest to, the photosensitive member, and a cover for sealing a developer to be conveyed by the developer carrying member therein, the developer-carrying member carrying and conveying the developer stored in the cover to develop the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive member; and

a clearance regulating member provided so as to be free from contact with a surface of the developer carrying member, the clearance regulating member regulating a clearance for an upper side of the developer carrying member;

wherein the clearance between the developer carrying member and the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a maximum height of the developer projected from the surface of the developer carrying member and the clearance regulating member has a leading edge provided to be free from contact with the developer.

7. (Amended) The developing device according to Claim 6, wherein when the developer carrying member is configured to have magnetic poles, the clearance for the developer carrying member provided by the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a height of a magnetic brush of the developer at a magnetic pole just downstream of a clearance